



Earl Stafford, Entrepreneur, Philanthropist

Earl Stafford is best known for helping more than 400 disadvantaged people attend the inauguration of President Obama in January 2009. Stafford had conceived of the idea for this unprecedented event in March 2008 during the presidential race, and he set up the People's Inaugural Project to fulfill his dream. Stafford's guests were given hotel lodgings for three days, during which they attended a prayer breakfast, a Martin Luther King Day luncheon featuring a keynote speech by Martin Luther King III, the inaugural parade and an inaugural ball. All expenses were covered by Stafford, including visits to hair salons and shopping for appropriate clothing. For Stafford, the ball was especially rewarding. "You couldn't distinguish the people with millions in the bank from those without anything," he said.

Earl W. Stafford is an entrepreneur and philanthropist. Born in New Jersey in 1948, Stafford served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years before becoming a businessman. In 1998, he founded Unitech, which provides training and computer simulation technology to



Earl Stafford announces his plan for the People's Inaugural Project in Washington. © AP Images

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Philanthropist Earl Stafford helped some 400 disadvantaged Americans attend President Obama's first inaugural celebration. © AP Images

federal and commercial customers. He stepped down as chairman and chief executive officer of the company in 2009.

In 2002, he founded the Stafford Foundation, a faith-based nonprofit organization that provides “support and assistance to

the underserved, the marginalized, the socially and economically distressed and [assists] them in helping themselves, and eventually to help others.” The foundation has given more than \$1 million to provide health, education and training to people in poor

communities. It also supports faith-based Christian programs, including building 20 churches in Africa. The People's Inaugural Project was one of the foundation's many programs.